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California Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary of the Smoke-Free Bar Law

Law protects bar workers and patrons from the dangers of secondhand smoke

San Bernardino – San Bernardino County residents are breathing easier when visiting their local bar, as California celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the Smoke-free bar law. This landmark public health measure implemented in 1998, prohibits smoking in bars in California, allowing both San Bernardino County bar workers and patrons to enjoy their local pub without the negative health risks associated with breathing secondhand smoke. California was the first state in the nation to have smoke-free bars, which has benefited the health of bar and restaurant workers and has been widely accepted by both smokers and non-smokers alike.

“For 10 years, San Bernardino County residents have been able to work in and patronize bars without having to sacrifice their health,” stated Dr. Margaret Beed, Health Officer with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. “We feel that this law is important for all of our residents, but especially for workers who are no longer forced to spend eight hours a day exposed to toxic secondhand smoke.”

Studies have shown that the respiratory health and lung function of bar workers improved after the ban took place, noting a decrease in respiratory symptoms such as coughing and wheezing. Statewide public opinion polls on the law have consistently shown extremely high levels of support by bar patrons, reporting that they visit bars more often or have not changed their bar patronage.

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of more than 4,000 compounds including carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde, arsenic and ammonia. At least 250 chemicals in secondhand smoke are known to be toxic, with over 50 listed as cancer-causing agents. According to a California

Environmental Protection Agency report, exposure to secondhand smoke has been linked to numerous serious health problems including lung cancer, heart disease and respiratory illnesses.

For more information, or to report complaints about smoking in San Bernardino County in enclosed workplaces such as bars, restaurants, or other businesses, contact the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Tobacco Use Reduction Now (TURN) program at 1-800-637-6653.

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